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Our knowledge of Debussy's life and music has increased considerably during the last decade or so, largely through the efforts of those working on the long-overdue complete edition of his music. Many of the contributors to the current volume have worked on various pieces in the complete edition and the significance of their research is apparent here. Topics include an examination of Debussy's working methods, his visual tastes and his response to literature, his reception in England, as well as aspects of performance practice. It also includes a close study of Debussy's relationship to the poet Stéphane Mallarmé. An appendix reproduces a discarded scene from Maeterlinck's 'Pelléas' for the first time, and the book is particularly rich in previously unpublished facsimiles and other little-known illustrative material.

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Debussy Studies

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Preface

A book entitled 'Debussy Studies' inevitably causes reflection on the state of the art: where are Debussy studies compared, say, to where they were thirty years ago? Thinking back to the mid 1960s is instructive, a useful marker, for in 1962, the centenary of the composer's birth, a spate of publications both advanced the cause and revealed the weaknesses of our understanding of the composer who has unarguably influenced twentieth century music more than any of his fellow countrymen.

Among the strengths of the centenary year was its spawning, in particular, of two major biographies: Dietschy's *La passion de Claude Debussy* and Lockspeiser's two-volume *Debussy, his Life and Mind*. While Dietschy's unearthing of source materials and Lockspeiser's broad cross-cultural sweep have indelibly enhanced our comprehension of the composer, in another way both books revealed the lack of material on the music itself, either in analysis or what might be called informed commentary. Both analysts and commentators seemed lost, lacking a language with which to penetrate the mysteries of Debussy's music. Beside this, another gaping gap also stared scholars and performers in the face, namely, the lack of a complete edition of his music.

Meanwhile musicological armies regrouped. Analysis moved forward on several fronts, with distinct methodologies all of which have by now been proved to enhance penetration of the music itself. Jean-Jacques Nattiez's work on segmentation; Richard S. Parks's work combining Schenkerian analysis and set theory; as well as the work on numerical proportion by Roy Howat who among Debussy analysts is one of the most informed by the study of original texts – each of these has pushed forward the type of study which centred on the notes themselves, where the earlier part of the century had largely produced books which ignored them.

Source studies *per se* have also deepened their roots, and in Debussy's case, the most unquestionably important advance in scholarship has been the inauguration of the Debussy *Oeuvres Complètes* originally from the

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combined publishers Durand and Costallat, and under the overall guardianship of François Lesure. Several of the contributors to the present volume have edited, or are editing, volumes for this edition. Its importance cannot be overestimated, not only because it will reveal seminal areas of Debussy's output which even now remain unperformed, but also because it has revealed to us some of the kitchen secrets of the composer's working methods.

Into the veiled category of Debussy's output fall the early songs, better known than they were, but for the most part still not yet published or only available in dribs and drabs. Among the major works unavailable in scholarly editions may be cited the 'other' opera *Rodrigue et Chimène*, performed and recorded (after a fashion) but unavailable in score; the (very beautiful) unpublished cantata *Diane au bois*, many early songs and *La chute de la maison Usher*, not to mention *Pelléas*.

Those working on the complete edition have added to our knowledge of the composer's work in more senses than one. How did he 'work'? The assembling and comparison of the sources necessary to arrive at a text for the new edition have thrown up all kinds of fascinating processes too broad for the critical apparatus of the *Oeuvres Complètes* editions themselves. The present collection is fortunate in being able to capture the working methods of the various editors while their *grands travaux* are still fresh in their minds.

It is hoped, though, that this volume is more than a collection – to use a well-worn phrase, more than the sum of its parts. How could it be otherwise? The team of scholars working together on the edition have, of course, revealed common practices, sometimes to their annoyance, with this composer so meticulous in some ways, and so frustrating in others. Corrections; notations at once fastidious and careless; confusions and incompatibilities have already affected the way we perform his music, performance in this respect meaning not only how we play the notes but which notes we play, for one of the most tangible fruits of the *Oeuvres Complètes* has been to reveal that Debussy's constant changes of mind were not always for the best. Or were they? The dispute rolls on – even on to the opera stage, as various permutations of interludes and post-production changes in *Pelléas* are used by this or that conductor. At the same time, *La mer* can now be heard to sing without its fanfares, and there can be little doubt that alter-

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native versions of other pieces will be put before us as the edition progresses.

Meanwhile literary source materials have been trickling out in a steady stream, quite a lot of them in articles in the *Cahiers Debussy*, originally the organ of the *Centre de documentation Claude Debussy* which cannot be allowed to pass by without mention of its role, and particularly that of its first *animatrice*, Margaret Cobb, in focusing Debussy scholarship, bringing scholars together, and in short, providing it with a warm and international welcome. Meanwhile the *Cahiers Debussy* performed the valuable service of maintaining an updated bibliography (by Claude Abravanel) while François Lesure's 'Catalogue de l'oeuvre de Claude Debussy' has charted sources, editions and first performances. In the way of a critical biography, James Briscoe's Garland Press 'Guide to Research' has also put down a marker.

As far as biography is concerned, since Dietschy and Lockspeiser, only François Lesure's two recent biographical volumes are dense in their presentation of new source material while the same author's continuing publication of Debussy's correspondence has also enriched our documentation on the composer. Those who have dealt with biographical aspects – and hardly any of the present contributors have resisted the occasional aside in this respect – show how Debussy's personality, wide ranging interests, and working methods all continue to fascinate scholars primarily concerned with other approaches, just as they fascinated both Dietschy and Lockspeiser in the 1950s and 60s.

A few other crucial studies deserve signalling, not that they exclude others but because they have initiated new angles of approach. Among these, Robert Orledge's *Debussy and the Theatre* deepened our understanding of the composer partly by illuminating his unfinished projects, while Jean Barraqué was perhaps unique in his perspective as a composer at the forefront of French music in the post-war period, and able to relate Debussy's music to current trends. For the English reader, Roger Nichols's edition of Debussy's letters, and his *Debussy Remembered* have been invaluable in their presentation not only of the best known sources, but also of many not easily available in French.

So much for context. The way in which the present collection came about is worth a mention. Firstly, it was animated by a desire to hold a

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colloquium of international Debussy specialists in Britain, a country which, after all, impinged on the composer's imagination in a number of ways, and which has (as Roger Nichols shows in his contribution) been particularly favourable as regards the reception of his works. Secondly, it was spurred on by a recognition that those working on the complete edition had uncovered wide areas of knowledge of a new kind, of infinite variety, not through biographical delving or the application of particular analytical methods, but simply by close and prolonged contact with Debussy's own manuscripts.

Thirdly, and most importantly, it was catalysed by the willingness of the Institut Français du Royaume-uni in London, and in particular of its *musicomane* director M. Michel Oriano, to host a series of *Journées Claude Debussy* in September 1993, centred on an academic conference and public concerts of Debussy's music. These concerts, which included a couple of unknown pieces, were given by both French and English artists while at the same time an exhibition of photographs pertinent to the composer's life was brought over by Myriam Chimènes especially for the occasion from the Centre de documentation Claude Debussy. Then came the agreement of Cambridge University Press that the series of papers given at the Institut Français *colloque* might fit well into a 'studies' volume and thanks to Penny Souster, Cambridge University Press chipped in with an exhibition from their unparalleled list of English-language books on French music, including many Debussy volumes, while Rosemary Dooley presented those of Minkoff. In the evening concerts, Alain Planès played, Véronique Diétschy sang and Robin Bowman accompanied – all thanks to the support of *Action Artistique*.

Meanwhile interest from both North and South America had mushroomed and while the contributors to the present volume were commissioned at the outset – although there were withdrawals and changes of topic – the conference expanded to include further contributions, several of which have appeared in the *Cahiers Debussy*. Although the initial plan was more balanced in its inclusion of more analytical contributions, the final volume has ended up with only one analytical contribution, that of Marie Rolf, which in any case leans equally towards literary analysis. Finally, no order seemed either better or worse than the alphabetical.

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From the interest shown in what was by no means a large-scale conference, it was clear that there will be room for a second *Debussy Studies*, centred on purely analytical papers, while the present volume may even be strengthened by their absence, in that it may show a diversity of angles broad enough to convince the reader that biographical and inter-disciplinary approaches, as well as those of source-studies and source-study-informed performance practice, have enough to recommend them in themselves, and more than adequate to fill a volume.

Richard Langham Smith

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to many people who have helped in the process of this book coming to fruition. First and foremost, gratitude is due to all the contributors for agreeing to the formula of a conference ‘try-out’ followed by publication, and particular thanks go to the contributors from France and the USA in this respect. Secondly, thanks go to the staff incumbent at the Institut Français at the time of the *Journées Claude Debussy*: firstly, to Michel Oriano whose support for the venture was sustained and unfailingly warm and secondly, to Charles Giry-Deloison who smoothed the path throughout the conference and provided all the conference peripherals in an exemplary way.

Many of the contributors deserve thanks for services far beyond the mere provision of copy: virtually every contributor has given a second opinion on something or other but in particular many of the contributors have expressed, in an editorially deleted footnote, their gratitude to Roger Nichols whose translations they have drawn upon. A collated vote of thanks is therefore due in this respect. Thanks also to Sidney Buckland for signalling several points which might otherwise never have been noticed.

Detailed acknowledgements, contributor by contributor, are as follows. For Myriam Chimènes: to the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, for a copy of the *Préparation orchestrale*, from the Robert O. Lehman foundation, formerly on deposit at the Pierpont Morgan Library, and to the Rychenberg Foundation, Stadtbibliothek, Winterthur, Switzerland for the *particelle*. For David Grayson: to James Hepokoski and to the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, for permission to publish the discarded scene from *Pelléas* (sic), from the Dannie and Hettie Heineman collection. For Denis Herlin: to Madame Daudy and Madame de Lastic at the Collection Musicale François Lang at Royaumont, and to Davitt Moroney, to whom the article is dedicated. For Jean-Michel Nectoux: to Rémy Copin at the Maison Claude Debussy at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Rodolphe Rapetti,

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A note on the references

Each article in the current volume has been footnoted as a separate unit and no overall key has been provided since the first time a citation is given in a particular article it is given in full. Subsequent references to the same work, within a particular article only, are designated by author followed by a short title and a page number where relevant.

References to Debussy letters have been given to the most recent accessible volume at the time of going to press, i.e. François Lesure's second collection *Correspondance 1884–1918* published in paperback by Hermann, Paris, in 1993. Readers wishing for the complete letters from which the present volume gives quotations are recommended to this volume where appropriate but may also find the complete letters in Lesure's earlier collection *Lettres* published in an illustrated hardback edition in 1980 by the same publisher. The 1993 volume contains all those found in the 1980 volume with the addition of 75 letters. The same letters may also be found in one of the earlier collections of letters, variously listed, for example, in the bibliography to Debussy in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 6th edition; in Claude Abravanel's *Claude Debussy: A Bibliography*, Detroit, 1974 and in James R. Briscoe's *Claude Debussy: A Guide to Research*. Readers are also referred to Roger Nichols's translation of *Debussy Letters*, Faber and Faber, London, and Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987. This volume contains letters not in either Lesure volume, in which cases the reader will be referred to a source for the original French in a footnote. Translations from Nichols are marked † in the footnote, those unmarked are by the chapter author, or in chapters 1, 3 and 5, by the translator.

As the book goes to press, publication of volumes for the Debussy *Oeuvres Complètes* has unexpectedly slowed down, indeed seized up. Volume and part numbers for published editions have been given, but although a complete projected list of volumes for the edition exists in the publicity material for the *Oeuvres Complètes*, these details have not been given for volumes not yet published.